

Welcome to brutality,

I'm giving you fury, Adrian "Slugger" Jackson, a fighter from a cesspit throwing hands. The rings are bloody, and bitter memories resurface, with every strike thrown. Crime is a lifestyle, makes you fear dying by not living. Finally, peace is found after the raging storm, where memories fade away. This is the story of fury shaped into purpose.

At the end, the monster is champion.

The glass crackles beneath my shoes, as I turn away from the bright, piercing light of the sun.

Up and down the road, the high-rises hold up the cloudless sky. Pale cinder-blocks held together with nails and paint.

A dark, rotting alleyway lies ahead of me, I can taste cigarette ashes in the air. Wilting and blackening in pools of blood and vomit that fester on the ground. Further into the tunnel, the screams and cries fill my ears; the gang-rats are still fighting.

A breath of wind rushes past, causing the grey fog to sift through their ranks.

They look my way, their eyes staring at my backpack.

“What are you doing here, punk?”

“You want me to answer that? I can if you want me to.”

The screaming cars fade into the background, a web of steel reaches up into the blistering heat.

Squinting from the rays, the rest of the gang appears, hooting and singing.

Their leader makes his way down the staircase, “I’ll make it easy for you then, hand over your bag and I won’t have to....”

“If you want to kill me, at least make it quick. If you don’t want to, boy, fuck off.”

He jumps onto the ground, his rich, snow-white shoes turning grey with the smoke, “Ohhh, you think you’re hot-shit?”

Crossing my arms, I stare intensely into his eyes, “I know I am. Why do you think your babes are looking at me?”

He takes half a step back, holding his arms out in front of his boys.

I look at them, “Just gonna stand there, little man?”

Growling at the gang-leader, “Or do you need this lot to take care of me? I will break you.”

“Get him, boys!”

Before they can draw their knives, I circle around to block the exit.

I give him a smile before I bury my head into his jaw, “I keep my promise.”

Throwing myself forwards, I fire my right hand into his throat.

He collapses hard onto the ground, coughing and spluttering, “You’re lucky. I would’ve finished the job.”

The gang reaches for their weapons, “Alright then, come on.”

They hesitate, looking at me warily.

I address each of them, “What, are you giving up?”

Their anger fades away as they turn to their leader.

Just the way it always is, all talk.

Taking a detour, I delve into the tunnel, hearing their cries and shouts fade into the morning traffic.

At the end of this dwelling, bright, dancing advertisements appear red, yellow, and blue.

I push into the crowd, which are smoking and drinking in the light.

A few turn to curse me, looking at my bag.

Great, now I have to deal with these piss-heads as well.

Despite my thoughts, the betting tables piling up with bottle-caps and wads of cash turns the attention of many, alongside the drinking booths, with golden liquor pouring out into big, glass canisters; I can still feel their preying eyes digging into the back of my skull. A few of the big-bosses breathe in the smoke from their cigars, turning into the shadowy mass of the fighting-pits.

Wouldn’t mind that, I think, watching the combatants circle around in the cage.

The sharp cracks of their blows ring loudly, blood and sweat covering the mat.

With a smirk I watch as the metal-link fences fade behind the bloodthirsty crowd.

I take in a breath, it never changes.

The last embers of the sun die out. Anywhere and everywhere, business continues.

A voice echoes in my ear, hoarse and dry, "Hey, Adrian, you got another delivery?"

A deep, guttural growl builds in the back of my throat, "What are you doing here?"

His face is ghost-like with black, uneven hair falling around him, "Hey, man, come on, it's your pal!"

"Go away. I don't have time for this."

His pale-feverish hands hover in the air, "It's good, man. Who's this for?"

"Does it matter, now can you shut up? The last thing I need is the hounds on my tail."

"Don't be like that, man. I'm your best friend after all."

I put my hand out and hold him firmly, "Really, are you saying that after I almost got nicked?"

He winces slightly, "Look, man, it was a mistake, honest."

Rolling my eyes at this my jaw locks as I spit out the words, "Yeah, you're really a winner in the honesty department. Now I've got this delivery to take care of."

His face appears clearly next to me, his eyes glimmering faintly, "That ain't the way, amigo."

Growling back my hands become like vices around the bag, "I wish it was."

Even in this cave of lights and smoke, I can hear the surf rolling in, pulling at the pale-grass and salt-beaten trees. At our feet are vermin, squeaking and dancing in the muck.

Looking up from the rats picking through the garbage, my bag seems to be a treasure-chest for some.

“Slow down, man. You got a few folk on your back?”

“I’m not planning to stick around to find out. Come on.”

Ducking off into one of the sub-sections, a few flickering lightbulbs form the ceiling, with metal walkways forming a night-like sky.

In front of us, tables and chairs are filling up with coffee, and off to the side the disco dancers continue to move, junkies and druggies stumbling around with no sense of rhythm.

Of course, I end up with Stanley. He’s always getting in the shit, and then asking me to drag him out of it. Then it appears, that chain-link fence that drifts onto the beach, with its rocky-red sand shining like a river of fire. A few surfers run into the swirling whirlpools, tanning themselves as they turn over lazily on the cement piers.

I step towards the subtle exit, wishing for a silent escape, “That’s our ticket out of here.”

Already, I can feel the cash folding into my hand, until Stanley catches the eye of one of the stealers.

“Ummm, man, I think the...the screws are onto us.”

I hiss violently into his ear, “Why couldn’t you keep your head down?”

“It seems like they want you, not me. At least this time round.”

Ahhh, so those boys are on my tail, great. We’ll have to take a detour.

Stanley is already walking up to the fence, “Adrian, where are you going?”

Pulling him roughly by the collar of his shirt, I wrench him towards a stuttering sign, “Shut up and stay low.”

His words catch in his throat, “What?”

I push him bodily towards another exit, “We’re taking the stairs, come on.”

He nods over to one of the boys, which has a nasty bruise, “I guess you gave them the works.”

Grumbling darkly, I can fear the chaos of the town returning, “Yeah and they’re coming back for more.” Emerging out from the underbelly, I blink out the fiery sun, coughing on the dust that is brought up by the racing cars.

Outside, on the main road, the salesmen are having a field day, selling motorcycles with a slimy yet charismatic air. Coffee stalls are hissing like vipers, with steam and currents of rich, smouldering beans drifting over from the food court. Emerging through a gap in the fence, I walk through the sloshing waste of the dumpsters and the fickle, second-hand smoke of cigars and breweries. A strong whiff of the beer, drugs and crackheads deter any residents from sticking their head into the alley, “What’s the rush, man? I think we lost em.”

I look back over my shoulder, maybe he’s right.

My eyes return to the metal benches, “He wants a faster delivery, plus get extra at the end.”

Stanley dances around the waiters, picking up the plates and empty-glasses, “That sounds sweet, so can you hit your boy up?”

“Not this time, I need the money.”

Stanley points a couple finger-guns, holstering them in his sweatpants, “Aww, come on, man, that’s no fun.”

“I can’t have a good time yet. Right now I got nothing.”

A sharp, howling takes place as the roadies approach, “Well, well, well, look who it is?”

Stanley jumps back into a table, scaring the seagulls away from their fish and chips.

“We have company!”

I step forwards, “HmMMM, so you’re up for round two?”

A few city-goers begin to take notice, looking over from their cell phones.

I can hear the gang walking up, their weapons on show, glow sticks and rusty knives.

In his trembling hand, is a flick-knife, “This time, my boys will kill you.”

“You know the rules of this place, if they throw us in a cell. I’ll beat you to an inch of your life.”

He steps forwards with his lads, standing at the ready.

The waitresses draw away, their checks and tips forgotten, “You want it, come and get it.”

As they hoot and howl, I lash out quickly, grabbing a table and throwing it into the two closest to me.

Doubling over from the sudden shock, I drive forwards from my right boot, throwing a hook that sends one crashing over the table.

“You wanted this. I’m going to put you in a wheelchair.”

A feral gait overtakes me; I can see the reflection of my eyes on the table.

Stanley picks up a plate, causing one of them to duck, “Shit!”

It shatters on the ground behind them; he picks up a second, this time nailing one in the shoulder.

The boss himself is closing in, swiping left and right with his knife.

Grabbing his arm, I pull him close so I can whisper into his ear, “Enjoy your life while it lasts.”

Elbowing him roughly, I raise my fists.

“I’ll drown you.”

He throws a hook which I take on the chin, spinning around to take the wild-blow.

The feral savagery quickly returns, “That’s it? My old man has a sharper hook than you do. Come on, bitch-boy, show me what you got.”

He grimaces, “There’s one problem, I never felt any of it.”

With a powerful, forward-heavy straight, I can feel his cheekbone fold beneath my knuckles. As he is falling down, I rotate my hips, swinging through with an uppercut which causes his teeth to wrap around my fingers. I can feel them digging through the skin, blood trickles onto the ground.

“You should’ve stayed in the cage. You’re not looking so pretty now.”

His mouth is open; a few of his teeth are on the pavement.

Stanley looks down at him, “Fuck man.”

I smile, flipping them off, “Come on then, step in and swing! Or are you feeling like running home to mummy, saying the big, bad wolf beat you up?”

My knuckles sting from the contact with his face, red-raw with blood.

I step forwards, picking up the boy before tossing him closer to them.

“You better take him home, if any of you want to follow me, your next.”

With those final words, they scatter.

Stanley begins beat-boxing a beat, “My boy, Adrian is here to thrash these peasants back home. Take their faces and put em out of commission, shattering it like glass, making em wish that they had dementia. My boy swings for the fences, better hope for the doc to put your lights out, before death decides to take you out.”

“I didn’t ask for a hype man.”

“You should, my price is a plastic sleeve.”

Stanley puts out his hand, naming his price.

Waving him off I make my way up the road, “Next time, come on.”



Heading off with him by my side we wander out of the food court. The people are watching us intently, as if trying to capture every detail that they can.

“Well, so much for not being on the news.”

“I don’t give a fuck, hey you, fatso! If you want to take a picture go ahead!”

As if on cue, they begin taking photos of the aftermath, a few beeps go off as they stop recording.

“Marie ain’t gonna be happy.”

I can imagine my sister, dirty-blond head in her hands, with her black and white poker-dots glimmering on her skirt. With her sharp eyeliner and mascara killing my sense of smell, ohhhhh, she’ll be happy alright, most exciting thing that’s happened all week.

Soon, the high-rises get lower and lower, going from five to three, before turning into red-brick houses. Stanley mutters, nursing his arm which is blotchy with bruises, “You reckon the geezer gonna complain?”

I wave him off, marking down the number on the form before tearing it, “Nah, he wants the goods, doesn’t matter how they get to him.”

Getting further and further away from the downtown plaza, the rustling of the grass and shifting leaves grow louder. Pulling open an old, rickety gate, I step over the bicycles and garden hose that bear the mark of the golden retriever, Max. I hold out my hand to it, as it licks at my arm, before prancing around with the newspaper.

“Fine, but come whimpering back, you hear?”

Dropping it obediently at my feet, I hurl it over the garden shed into the back yard.

The screen door rattles open; the old man crosses his arms with an even scowl.

“There’s not a speck on it.”

He holds out his hand, “I’ll be the judge of that.”

Pulling at the zip, he takes it out before concealing it beneath a metal bucket.

From his back pocket, he folds several notes into my hand, "Everything is there?"

"Yes," he sighs wearily, "Can you get rid of that newspaper; it's not good for Max."

Counting the money, I hold out my hand.

"Got sharp eyes on ya," he reluctantly hands over the rest.

With the slobbery newspaper, I toss it into recycling as the Max jumps along, his golden fur glimmering over the white-picket fence.

The man whistles for him, he runs into the house as he slams the door shut.

Making my way down the slight incline, I can make out my house, a brown-black hovel poking out from unruly hedges and trees, the yard turning to straw. A few patches of green appear, made up mainly of weeds and brambles. They bite into my shoes as make my way over to the far-side, with its wooden and brick mix holding chips and mortar.

Stanley makes his way around the fence, "You're done already?"

"That geezer's right gotta duck away when I can."

Careful not to rest his arms on the metallic part of the fence, "C'mon, man, we should party. I mean we beat up the local gang and you landed a big pay-day."

I shake my head, Stubborn idiot, I guess even he can't quit.

A couple flowers peek through the muddy-dirt which I carefully step over.

"See ya, Stanley. Try to avoid trouble."

Tipping his head, he takes off down the footpath, "Good advice, Addy."

Walking to the front-door, there is nothing but silence.

Picking up the garden hose, I wash my hands over, watching the dirt turn red.

As the door creaks open, Marie is waiting for me, the volume now thundering into my ears.

“You got into another fight!”

Her sharp, piercing blue eyes appear. The words spat out like hissing snakes, “Look!”

On the television, I can see the headline, ‘Shocking Violence – Young hoodlums’, showing the broken, crying boy on the ground and Stanley ducks behind the upturned table, throwing a plate like a javelin.

“They were asking for it, Marie.”

“You can’t keep doing this. What if the cops decide to pay a visit?”

I stare into her eyes without a sliver of emotion, “Then I’ll tell them the truth.”

All of it, the little, silver-spoon bitch won’t get anything out of me.

“Adrian.”

“What?”

Shaking her head, she blows a strand of hair away, “What are we going to do with you?”

“Make it easier for yourself; I know that your boyfriend is dropping by.”

Hearing the hiss building quickly, I smile to myself, “What was that?”

“So, what is it up to now, number four, number five?”

“Shut up!”

“No, I’m really confused, so blondie only lasted a week. Yet, dreadlocks only lasted two.”

It cracks like a whip, “Get out!”

I look to her eyeliner, “Love to, but can’t. How about you get out of your Goth phase and buy yourself something?”

“You bitch!”

“Thank you, I appreciate that. Now, I’ve got homework to finish.”

Walking down the hallway, I can see the stains of beer running down the walls, with a few shoeprints breaking through the plaster. Flicking on the lights, they flicker for a good-while, with moths dying by the second. My desk is hidden behind an avalanche of magazines, models and a hive of flies picking through the musky, ash-collector. The monitor hums away, a mechanical sighing that continues as I flick the mouse around. Eventually, the black screen comes alive.

A breath of wind pulls at the blinds, causing them to bounce along the glass. Walking over to my school-bag, I tear the window across, hearing it scream.

With my homework in hand, I tear away at it.

Marie pokes her head in, “Homework to finish? That’s a first.”

“I will use this dictionary on your head. Now don’t you have something else to be doing?”

“Please. You really think I’d be stuck-up like you?”

“Maybe you should go shopping then. Your wardrobe could use it.”

“You don’t get to use the same thing twice.”

She drops her voice to a whisper, “Dad’s home. You might luck out this time.”

I shrug, “Does it matter?”

Putting her hand on shoulder, she looks over at the flower she gave me, “No, stay safe, you idiot.”

A small heart-felt smile appears on the monitor, “I’ll try to.”

“Night, bro.”

“Right back at ya.”

A light, crescent moon phases through the sky, with stars twinkling above the lights of the town.

I’m resting, feeling a dozen, square fingers pressing into my head.

A voice echoes in the recesses of my mind, a dark silhouette appears, you cannot live without me, Jackson, drink it in.

All I see is blood, and a cage with the sounds of combat echoing in my ears.

I groan messaging my forehead, “Ahhhh, damn. I knew I should’ve quit.”

Falling into bed, I hear the humming purr of the motherboard die out.

Again, the creature returns, laughing hideously as the gang-leader crumbles. I can see it all, the cameras and reporters kneeling down, eager for their headlines. It shares my laughter, cackling at the scene, its knife-like hands red from the battle.

Its last words hover in my mind, you enjoy doing it.

“Adrian, get up!”

“Fuck me, why are you screaming?”

Marie pokes her tongue out at me, “School! That’s why!”

A wave of heat brushes past the blinds, falling onto my brow.

Blinking away the last seconds of sleep, I mutter, “Really, really, school. You gotta be kidding.”

“I’m not driving you in today; I’ve got a lot on. So you better get off your ass and get moving.”

In the corner of the room, my cabinet remains open, the shorts and pants a mess, and the coat-hangers looping over, “Fine. See ya.”

Just my luck, another day wishing I could put my head through the desk. Maybe I should, at least then I’d have a reason to be sent home. I’d have to do a good job of it, get stitches, the works.

Throwing a bowl onto the counter, I pour about half a box of flakes into it, before drowning it in milk.

Or get into a fight, maybe I could get one of those four-eyes freaks to hand their work over.

Nah, not worth it, those fuckers could tell in a millisecond.

Stepping outside, Stanley is waiting for me, “Hey, man, how’s it going?”

“What do you think? I had my sister screaming in my ear.”

“That’s life, mate, you want to skip?”

“Skip? What’d ya mean?”

“Got a special something in town, Addy, fight time.”

I look towards him slowly, “What?”

“Come on, you heard those buggers killing each other. Looks like some of em got the rough end; boss-man is looking for more fighters, getting paid double-rate, less risk than getting nicked.”

“When is this happening?”

“Afternoon, hope you don’t like science, mate.”

“Fuck yeah; I needed a reason to skip, you tagging?”

“Sure, I may not be a Marie, but I do have something besides powder on the brain.”

“We better get on a bus; I won’t have those pansies breathing down my neck.”

“Don’t have to tell me twice.”

After kicking around a bunch of bottles, the bus arrives in a huff, “Great, gonna be trapped in the jailhouse. Come on.”

Flung back into my seat, the sky turns grey, as buckets of rain crash into the windows.

“Where is it?”

“You know the place, down on Colton.”

Soon, the schoolyard appears a great mess of modern and falling apart.

Stanley walks past the computer-block, talking a bunch of technics with the nerdy, four-eye freaks, “That’s the bell. See you after roll-call?”

“Sure. You do have my maths done, right?”

He waves them off, "Yeah, just make sure you go over it in your name. Don't go pawning my shit on it."

"I only made that mistake once. See ya."

Punching me on the shoulder, he takes off into G-Block, ducking through the garden-beds.

"Great."

Walking lazily up the stairs, the sky is darkening further.

I walk into the classroom catching the eyes of a few students, who are already beginning to whisper.

Probably about that bike-head, if I got a suspension, I would consider it a favour.

"Late as usual, Jackson, sit down."

Sitting down at my desk, I trail my finger along its surface.

"Now that everyone is here, I stress that this is the time that you need to be at..."

Boring, boring, you'd think after years of doing this crap, they could actually make it exciting.

She cracks the ruler on her hand, "Pay attention!"

I lean back casually, "C'mon miss, you gonna say the same things that you always do."

"I'm not in the mood, Mister Jackson."

Neither am I. Don't even know why I bother walking through that front gate.

Resuming her position at the head of the class, "Make sure you hand assignments in on time. Make sure you study. These are essential to deciding your future, a classroom can define...."

In other words, you're selling your soul. Why the hell would I bother doing it?

The bell finally rings, thank fuck for that.

“Have a great day everyone!”

Who cares?

A cluster of trees encircles the path. Rain breaks through the leaves, painting the dry-path with droplets that grow bigger and bigger with each second that passes. The chain-link fences and the garbage bins have been taken by the crows, which are ripping into plastic wrap and broken, soda cans. Their eyes turn to my slick hair, “Sod off.”

As they take off, I head through the canteen, watching a few toadies swig deep.

A few students are now taking their time, wrestling for their textbooks.

Swear those teachers can't get enough, must really love making it miserable.

They wait patiently, marking us off with their eyes. Feeling the warmth of a few heaters; I shoulder my way over next to it.

The rest of the day felt pretty much the same.

“Alright, man, the hour has arrived.”

“Took you long enough, Stanley, you don't have one of those hawks following you?”

“Nah, man, I shook em off. Besides, they love staying in the office.”

“Bet they do. Come on, let's get out this dump.”

As we pass the gate, a familiar piercing voice tears at my ears, “Where do you think you're going?”

“Hey, sis, I'm going off, let Dad know I'm staying back or some shit.”

Marie walks in front of me, “You are not doing this again. I'll....I'll....”

“Report me? Really, c'mon you can do better than that.”

She tries reaching for my hand, “They're going to kick you out.”

“Yeah, that'd be great. No longer spending my day wishing I was deaf.”



With a smile, I begin waving, "See ya, sis."

Muttering darkly, she gives in, "Fine, but don't come crawling back to me."

"Hey, hey, take it easy, can't be top of the class if you pop a blood vessel."

As the pulls in, I begin flipping off some of the teachers on duty.

With their voices screeching through the air, I jump onto the bus, "Finally out of that shit-hole. Now tell me about these fights."

Stanley leans closer to me, "When we get off, just follow my lead. The less said the better. You'll understand why."

"Okay, Stanley. I just hope this isn't some yard with pigs in a pen."

"Hey, man, your boy's coming through with the goods."

As I draw closer to town, blood is in the air.

## **Author's Bio**

I wanted to venture into the life of a struggling youth, with plenty of drive, talent and ability.

A natural fighter, he climbs the ladder of success, eventually reaching the heights of the World Heavyweight Championship. Along the way, he finds a father figure, Marcus Page who helps him escape the effects of domestic abuse.

In the end he finds wisdom and peace. Promising to bring what he has learned to better the lives of others.